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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 000043

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 22, 2007

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 22, 2007. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL

EVRENSEL: Newroz celebrations started early in the morning in many southeastern provinces. More than 300,000 people reportedly participated in the celebrations in Diyarbakir. The tradesmen did not open their businesses on the day and people clad in traditional attire poured to the area where celebrations would be held. DTP leaders, now-dissolved DEP's former deputy Leyla Zana, EMEP (Party of Labor) national leader, SDP (Socialist Democracy Party) national leader, president of KESK (Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions), president of TMMOB (Turkish Union of Engineers' and Architects' Chambers), European parliamentarian Feleknaz Uca, Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir, a Japanese diplomatic delegation, several union and political party representatives were among the attendees of the event in Diyarbakir. Thousands of people reportedly attended celebrations in Mardin, Batman, Van, Tunceli, Malatya, Adiyaman, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Siirt, and several other cities. Contrary to expectations, Newroz was held in a peaceful and festive environment, reported the daily. People burned fires, danced folkloric dances, and sang songs in Kurdish, Turkish, Zaza, Laz and Armenian languages. A giant banner which quoted the remarks of well-known author Yasar Kemal, which were uttered during opening remarks at a former conference, was hung in the venue for the event. It read: "Be it a true democracy, or no democracy at all." Some banners read: "The solidarity of Turks is possible via the solidarity of Kurds." Ms. Leyla Zana delivered a speech most of which was in Kurdish, and said that there were three leaders of the Kurds: Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Head of the Kurdistan Regional Authority Massoud Barzani, and Abdullah Ocalan. The daily further reported that 50,000 people in Batman, 30,000 in Gaziantep and 3000 people in Adiyaman attended Newroz. The figures in other provinces were given as "thousands of people." Aysel Tugluk, DTP deputy chairperson, went to Van for Newroz. People in Van read aloud the Newroz greeting sent by Ibrahim Sunkur, DTP Van Provincial Chairperson, from jail. Sunkur was arrested towards the end of February after police announced grounds for suspecting his involvement with the PKK. People cheered and applauded after Sunkur's message was read. In Batman, Selim Sadak, DTP administrator of the national headquarters, EMEP deputy chairperson and Batman Mayor were the prominent figures that attended the local Newroz event. Metin Tekce, Hakkari Mayor, who was recently sentenced to seven years in prison for making propaganda for a terrorist organization, attended Newroz in Van.

Selim Sadak reportedly delivered harsh criticism against recent arrests and detentions of DTP officials and obstructions placed against Kurdish people to hinder them from getting involved in Turkey's political arena. (Translator's Note: A one-month ban was issued against Ozgur Gundem daily at the onset of March, and, access to the internet site of the daily has been banned recently by a court order. End Note.)

BOLGE / SABAH (GUNEY) / ZAMAN / RADIKAL / HURRIYET: The dailies reported that the people's interest in the Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakir were less than expected, and, 68 people were detained in Diyarbakir on grounds that they carried posters in support for the terrorist organization. Hurriyet daily noted that people read the Newroz greeting Abdullah Ocalan sent through his attorneys to the public at the onset of the celebrations in Diyarbakir. Also, children wearing peshmerga attire reportedly waved PDD flags in the arena. Mick Jagger's former wife Bianca Jagger attended Newroz in Diyarbakir. Radikal daily notes that over 200 hundred people were detained nationwide in minor scuffles that took place during celebrations. Sabah Guney daily reported 20,000 people attended Newroz in Mersin. Three women were wounded during scuffles in Siirt. Hamza Gul, an NTV journalist, and a Dogan News Agency journalist in Adana incurred minor wounds when struck by stones thrown by the audience in the Newroz celebrations held in Adana's Mimar Sinan Open Air Theater. Meanwhile, the fire of the Newroz festivity held by Adana Governor's Office was set by one of the deputy governors at a cultural center of Adana. Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Ambassador to Turkey attended Newroz celebrations at Mustafa Kemal University in Hatay and planted trees to symbolize the concept of peace.

BOLGE / EKSPRES: Some civil society organizations held a protest march as they carried torches against the anniversary of

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the start of war in Iraq, in Adana yesterday evening. Spokesperson of the Adana Platform of KESK's branches said in a press declaration that the U.S. was shedding more blood each day in Iraq.

CRIME / LAW ENFORCEMENT

BOLGE / EKSPRES: Seyhan Municipality Police carried out a crackdown on bootleg wine producers in Adana in coordination with the Adana police. In several operations, 200 bottles of bootleg wine were seized from merchants. The seized wine will reportedly be destroyed.

BOLGE: Police detained one person in Adana who was carrying in a bag of eight so-called PKK flags. It is reported that the detainee intended to use the flags during the Newroz festivities.

BOLGE / ZAMAN: Mustafa Attaroglu, Chairperson of AKP's Adana chapter, announced that a law faculty would be founded at Cukurova University.

CULTURE / SOCIETY / ENVIRONMENT

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): A 21-year-old private serving at one of Silopi's Jandarma Border Commands committed suicide with his gun.
GREEN